

THE THREE AGES.

THE AGE OF ACTION, 1500, A. D.,———, PRESENT DAY.

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The last age we have seen gradually outgrew its old character and developed a new one. Speculation took a practical direction, thought became active, and made itself visible in the discoveries and inventions which characterized the latter part of the age. The scholastic entology proved its own ruin. Its barrenness resulted in its desertion and in the discovery of a new field whose cultivation was destined to yield a glorious harvest. It was no longer capable of affording nourishment to an age about to enter upon a strong and vigorous manhood, whose activities were awakening from their long slumber, and upon which the sun of liberty was to shine in all its unclouded splendour. The age became dissatisfied, it craved for food which was capable of nourishing and invigorating, and the very craving was the cause and precursor of a new development. Years before Bacon appeared, he was anticipated. The tendency of the age was Bacon-ward, long before it became really and visibly Baconian. He was the result of all that preceded,—the son of the Past, from whose womb he, in due time, was delivered. Just as the waters of the noble St. Lawrence, derive their volume and depth from the united confluence of many rivers, rivulets and streams, which empty themselves into its broad channel; so does Bacon and the age in which he lived derive all the importance and distinction from the events which precede its appearance. The age which is just passing away seems steeped in a twilight which is to prove the harbinger of a cloudless day. Men dare to think. The consciousness of right inspires courage and dispels fear. A general resurrection of mind takes place. The few who had already tasted the sweets of liberty longed to see all participators in its glorious privileges. The authority of the Church was questioned, resisted and ultimately defied. The age felt the shackles of its tyranny and broke them asunder. It outgrew its dress and craved for a suit adapted to its years. Schools and universities were beginning to be established, where young thought was trained to know its powers, and its rights to use them. The necessary result was a reformation, visibly inaugurated in the religious world by Luther, in the intellectual, by Bacon. These reformations were the inevitable results of a general emancipation of mind from the thralldom of the Church, and results, it must be remembered which flow from the same combination of causes. Expressed generally, these movements consisted in the assertion of liberty of thought of which they were particular manifestations. Mental enlightenment paved the way for mental and religious freedom. The work which Copernicus, Roger Bacon, Galileo and others did, de-